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ABSTRACT

The investigators in this preliminary study (currently underway at the University of Towson, Maryland) used the experiences of preservice elementary teachers as revealed by their journals and interviews to obtain insights that will enable them to develop a more satisfactory and professional induction to teaching for beginning teachers. A content analysis of journals that subjects kept during their teaching experience revealed recurring patterns in the areas of: (1) attitude toward work; (2) view of teaching; (3) personal relations with colleagues and children; (4) practical skills; (5) commitment to teaching; and (6) self-assessment. A discussion is presented of the patterns of change that appeared to occur as the students progressed through the student teaching experience. It is posited that if a precise determination can be made of what happens to preservice teachers in their college and university training, it may be possible to better assist beginning teachers in their process of induction into the world of work. Also, if a more precise determination can be made of what happens to beginning inservice teachers in their induction process, it may be possible to develop better teacher education programs. (JD)

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USING JOURNALS AND INTERVIEWS TO STUDY THE INDUCTION PROCESS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

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Introduction

The use of journals and interviews with beginning teachers has been identified by many researchers as a means for uncovering the day-to-day evolution of a teacher. Their use has been helpful in producing needed information about teacher needs and problems. Studying journals and interviews has permitted the investigators of this study to use the experiences of preservice teachers that are presented in their journals and interviews to develop a more satisfactory and professional induction to teaching. The investigators hope that this inquiry will uncover ways and means that may be useful for enhancing the present system for preparing teachers-in-training for induction into the world of full-time teaching.

The investigators in this study think of themselves as teacher-researchers using context-based information that may lead toward greater theory integration. The collected information, and the reflection on it, may shed more light on the experiences of newly inducted persons into the teaching profession. In turn, this "light" may point to better models for preservice teacher education and the induction process in general.

Several steps were taken to conduct this preliminary study: (1) a content analysis of journals that subjects kept during their teaching experiences, (2) a categorization of the experiences revealed in the journals, (3) an initial comparison of the findings, and (4) the development of a semi-structured interview schedule prepared for follow-up purposes. Some features of this preliminary study have progressed well, but the opportunity for analysis of first-year teachers and their materials has not yet appeared. That phase of the study must be deferred until later in 1987.

Why study this part of a preservice teacher's life? If meaningful introductory experiences are to be planned for students, if logical seminar content and reasonable counseling sessions are to be managed, and if problems, stresses and conflicts of beginning teachers are to be anticipated, then some evidence

must be gleaned of the reactions, the impressions and observations of our students' work. So much of the program critique in teacher education programs is ex post facto, i.e., final evaluations, follow-up questionnaires and debriefing sessions are used at the end of undergraduate programs. End of program review is probably too late to trace the most significant experiences at that point, for how preservice teachers truly feel and think about their initial teaching experiences is no longer fully remembered by them.

The investigators have found some interesting patterns emerging from the journals that have been submitted thus far, and they are confident that these contain signals that are relevant and need to be considered when planning for teacher preparation and induction. Many practical features, concerns and attitudes are presented in the journals. Students have volunteered information about the helpfulness of their journals as being therapeutic, and it appears that by acknowledging their problems and difficulties, students are better able to find solutions to their problems. One way to further examine the content of student journals has been to develop a semi-structured interview schedule to test the internal consistency of what has been found in the student journals.

Procedures

Towson State University is a mid-size comprehensive university, with a full-time day, undergraduate enrollment of nearly 12,000 students, serving the greater Baltimore metropolitan area. Some 1,000 of these students are in teacher education, and as with most of the students at the University, they are first generation college students. Most majors in Elementary Education at Towson State are female, white and from surrounding suburban communities.

Students in the Elementary Education program at Towson State University are required to maintain journals as part of a contract grading system in their Curriculum I Semester coursework. The Curriculum I Semester at Towson is the block of methods courses preceding the student teaching semester. Generally, students take these semester courses consecutively at the end of their junior

year or during their senior year. The Curriculum I Semester also has a one-day-a-week field experience component as well.

In the journals the students are asked to document their day-to-day evolution as teachers by observing their instructors on campus, their cooperating teachers off campus, and each other during their field experiences. They are asked to begin to consider their own personal teaching style in relation to others and their styles of teaching. "Prompts" for the journals are given throughout the semester. The instructor reads the journals and "peer response" groups (usually three or four students) also read the journal entries of individuals periodically during the semester. Entries are not corrected or graded. Reactions to entries are noted in a variety of positive ways: underlines, exclamation points, smiley faces, commentaries, etc.

Students are asked, in keeping with this study, to volunteer to continue maintenance of their journals during their student teaching semester. During the student teaching semester, volunteers send or bring their journals to campus. The investigators react to the journals in the manner described above and return the journals to the student teachers as quickly as possible.

After scrutinizing the journals from both semesters, the investigators evolved a preliminary coding system as part of their content analysis of the journals received. B. F. Skinner's Principle of Serendipity, " . . . the art of discovering one thing while looking for something else," reigned in the formation of both the molar categories and their subcategories.

In reading through the journals, the investigators found reocurring items and these were used to form subcategories. The molar categories are groupings reasoned out from the various subcategories. Five molar categories: VIEW OF WORK, ATTITUDE, PERSONAL RELATIONS, PRACTICAL SKILLS, INVESTMENT and ASSESSMENT were extracted by the investigators as the most useful. These

appeared to be general groupings appropriate for the many concerns and comments listed in the journals. Each molar category contains several subcategories (See Appendix).

Four sets of journals were selected for intensive study. Findings and patterns discerned in these are reported in the following section. The coding done on the sets of journals has been quantified and placed in graph form to enable the investigators to see patterns existing between each student's experiences and among the four students (See Appendix).

To examine further the internal consistency of the preliminary findings of this study, the investigators determined that a semi-structured interview schedule should be constructed as a next step in the study. Interview questions were derived from the molar categories of the coding system used by the researchers to study the original journal entries (See Appendix).

Findings

The entries in each journal were categorized, and the totals in each category were placed in tables with raw scores and percentages of total entries (See Appendix). The investigators then studied the charts and the graphs that picture the proportions and found some contrasting as well as corresponding features in the profiles of the four students.

While continuing to inspect the entries in the journals (and the profiles these present in the categories) for more information and patterns, the following are findings that warrant further study:

View of Work: Percentage of entries for semester one is high in this category for three students, but then emphasis diminishes in semester two. The fourth person's journal reflects a reverse situation.

Attitude: Percentage of entries in this category tends to remain consistent from one semester to the next. Positive attitude

entries represent a substantial portion of the entries in all four sets of jounals. Note that both positive and negative notations appear in this molar category.

Personal Relations: Percentage of entries in this category tends to increase modestly from semester one to semester two. Perhaps as students mature and contact increases with children, other teachers and parents, then more importance is attached to this area. Perhaps students simply acknowledge to a greater degree the presence of other people. This molar category also includes both positive and negative notations.

Practical Skills: Percentage of entries in this area increases from semester one to semester two for three of the four students. Most of this is an acknowledgement of classroom ideas, techniques, media and the like. Evidently most students continue to be intrigued with the "bag of tricks" that teachers possess.

Investment: In both semesters, the notation in this area is minimal. Investigators found little evidence of commitment or crusading spirit. It is possible that this molar category overlaps with another molar category, "Attitude."

Assessment: This area includes a fair portion of the entries for three students - and most of these notations have to do with self assessment. Interestingly, the evidence suggests that students show less concern with this category during the student teaching semester. Is the anxiety about evaluation actually less at that time?

When one considers the category interactions, there are some additional findings. The areas that receive less attention during the second semester are

View of Work and Assessment. The increases are in Public Relations and Practical Skills. Is there a relationship between these areas that shows students becoming less analytical/evaluative as they move through student teaching and more oriented to tangible things and public relations? Will that focus continue into first year teaching? Would an interview schedule enable the investigators to answer such questions as they arise?

Implications

In reviewing the findings of this preliminary investigation, these teacher-researchers must continue to "mess" with the data. A next step will be to conduct interviews with the subjects, their cooperating teachers and college supervisors and to study additional materials about these students to verify their journal entries, the researchers' category system and the interview schedule. Such materials might include transcripts, end of course student evaluations, evaluations of supervising teachers and college supervisors and so on. For example, is age a factor (two of the four students were returning students with additional work experience and parenting skill)?

With the refinement of the category system and the interview schedule and even closer scrutiny of the journal entries of preservice teachers, the investigators will be even better prepared to monitor the work of beginning teachers once they leave the university setting. The overall results of this study ought to be circular: if we can determine more precisely what happens to preservice teachers in their college and university training, we ought to be able to better assist beginning teachers in their process of induction into the world of work. Likewise, if we can determine more precisely what happens to beginning inservice teachers in their induction process we may be able to develop better teacher education programs that meet the needs of beginning teachers at either the preservice or inservice level.

APPENDIX

Category System

VIEW OF WORK

Perception:

* Problem sense
* Theory to practice
* Child development
* Reflections
* Interpret child

Relationships or views:

* Interpret class work
* Organization of class

Getting handle on work

Observation on teaching

Contrasting teaching

ATTITUDE

Positive reaction

Negative reaction or frustration

Anxiety or suspicion

Empathy

Objective view

Doubt

PERSONAL RELATIONS

Observation of others

Making friends with child

Making friends with teacher

Parents or others

Problems with others

PRACTICAL SKILLS

Idea gain

Fitting into system

Something works

Doesn't work

Media ideas/work

Motivation

Idea confusion

Observation/description

INVESTMENT

Vigor

Commitment

Concern over drive

Negative drive

ASSESSMENT

Self

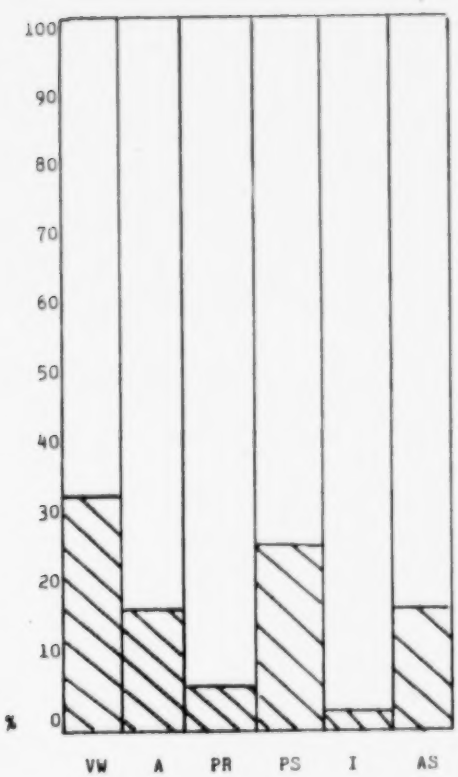
Of others

System

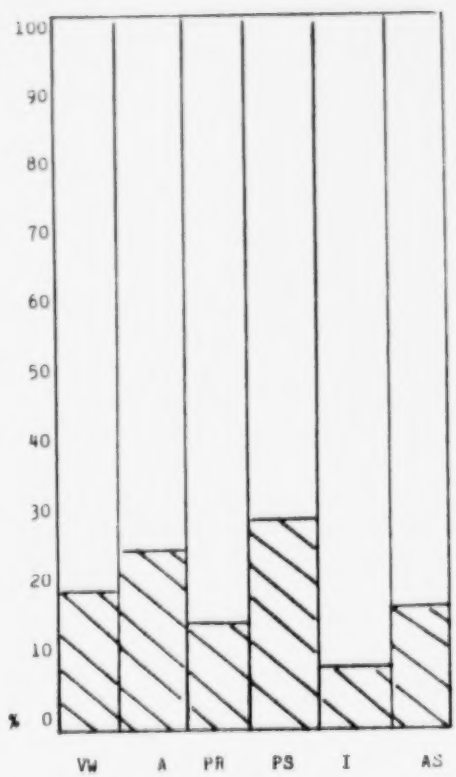
From others

Student A

	CURRICULUM I		CURRICULUM II	
	# of Entries	Percentage	# of Entries	Percentage
View of Work	106	31	39	19
Attitude	61	18	45	22
Personal Relations	18	5	27	13
Practical Skills	84	25	56	27
Investment	11	3	13	6
Assessment	61	18	29	14
TOTAL	341	100	209	100



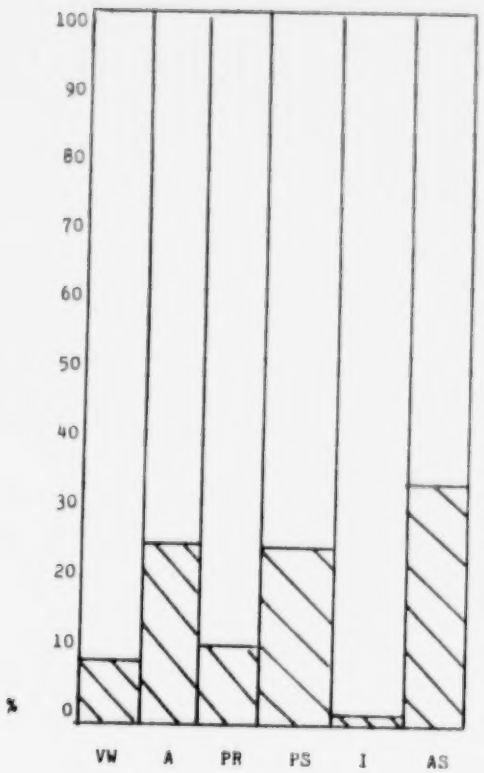
CURRICULUM I



CURRICULUM II

Student B

	CURRICULUM I		CURRICULUM II	
	# of Entries	Percentage	# of Entries	Percentage
View of Work	3	8	21	15
Attitude	9	24	32	22
Personal Relations	4	10	19	13
Practical Skills	9	24	25	18
Investment	1	2	10	7
Assessment	12	32	35	25
TOTAL	38	100	142	100



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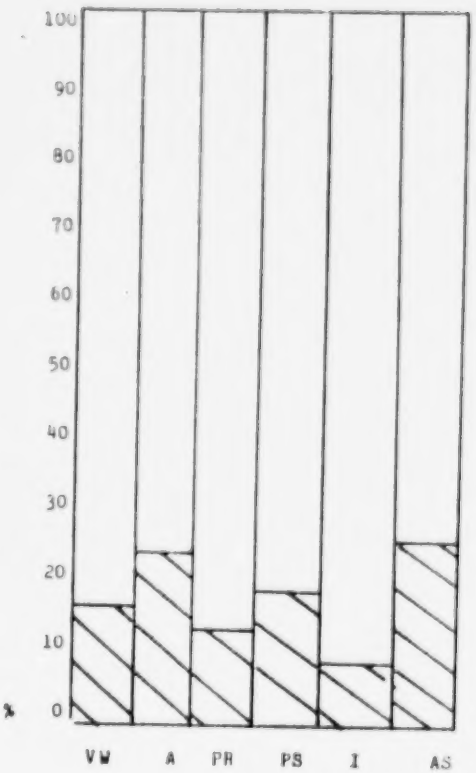
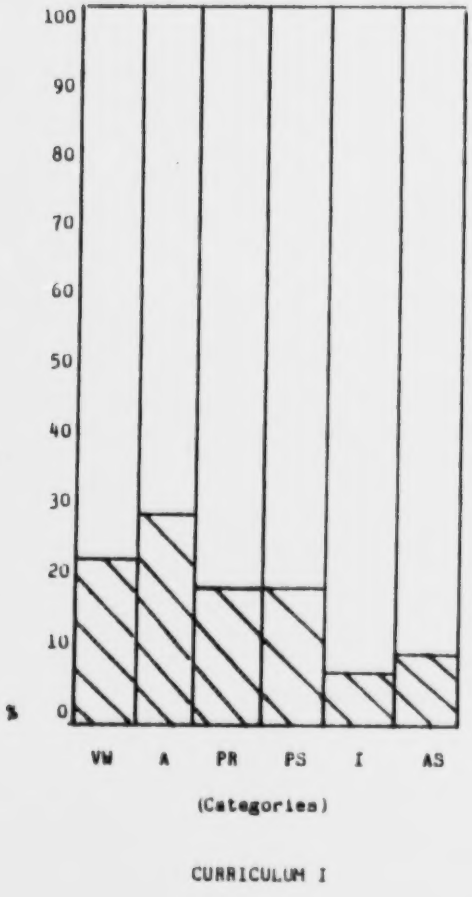


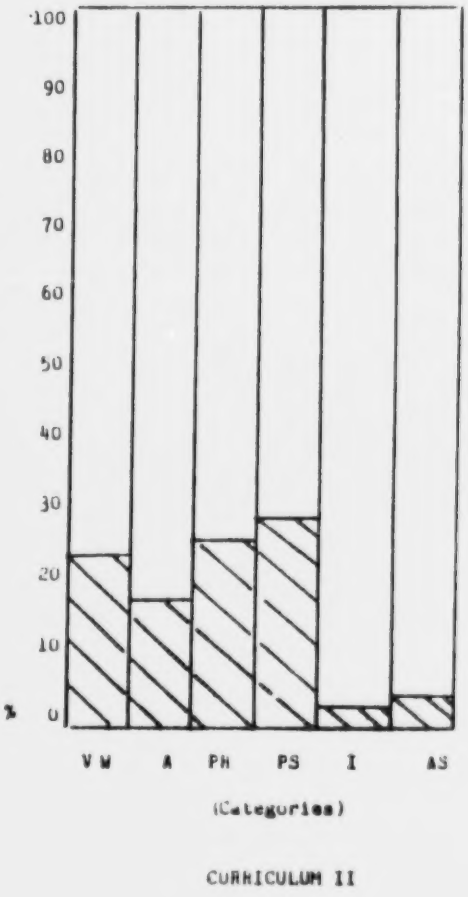
CURRICULUM II

Student C

	CURRICULUM I		CURRICULUM II	
	# of Entries	Percentage	# of Entries	Percentage
View of Work	17	21	29	22
Attitude	22	28	22	17
Personal Relations	14	18	35	26
Practical Skills	14	18	37	28
Investment	5	6	4	3
Assessment	7	9	5	4
TOTAL	79	100	132	100



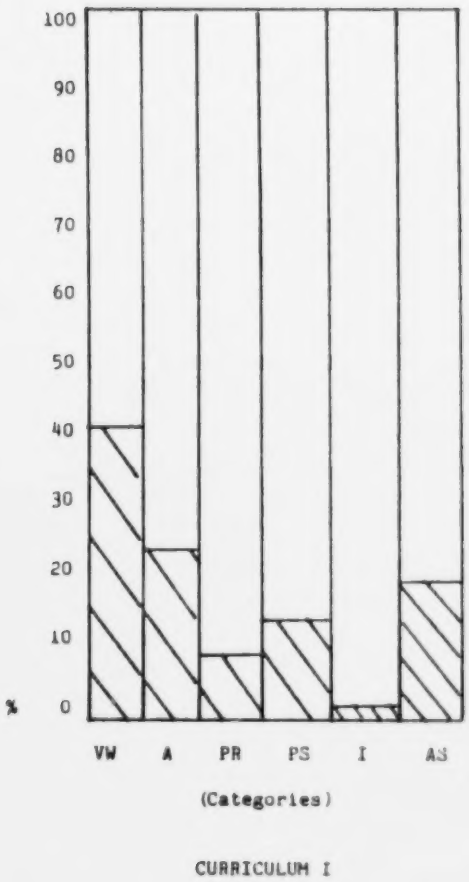
CURRICULUM I



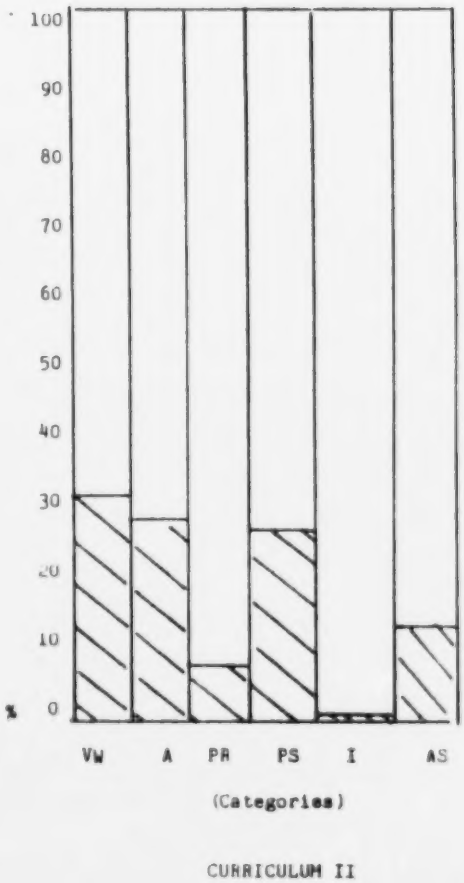
CURRICULUM II

Student D

	CURRICULUM I		CURRICULUM II	
	# of Entries	Percentage	# of Entries	Percentage
View of Work	85	40	52	30
Attitude	46	22	47	27
Personal Relations	17	8	9	5
Practical Skills	24	11	44	26
Investment	4	2	1	1
Assessment	36	17	19	11
TOTAL	212	100	172	100



CURRICULUM I



CURRICULUM II

Interview Schedule

I. Assessment

A. How do you assess yourself as a teacher?

B. How do you think others assess you as a teacher?

II. View of Work

Does your preparation for teaching connect with the work you are doing in your classroom now?

III. Practical Skills

Do you find yourself caught up with continuing to look for "tricks of the trade"?

IV. Attitude

What are some of your personal reactions to teaching?

V. Personal Relations

Thinking about personal relations in the schoolhouse, what is your situation?

VI. Investment

What is your future as a teacher?

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